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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCO UNDERSTANDS U.S. CONCERNS ABOUT UNESCO
CANDIDATES FOR DIRECTOR-GENERAL

REF: STATE 130916

Classified By: POLCOUNS Craig Karp for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff relayed U.S. concerns regarding the potential candidacy of Egyptian Culture Minister Farouk Hosni for the position of UNESCO Director-General to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Head of Section of Candidatures and Contributions for the United Nations and International Organizations Ms. Rime Jirari on December 23. Jirari told Poloff that Morocco understands the issues surrounding Hosni's candidacy and that many other nations share the same concerns. She confirmed that Egypt is already lobbying countries for their support.

¶2. (C) Jirari explained that Morocco withdrew the nomination of current Moroccan Ambassador to UNESCO Azziza Benani because the American delegation was concerned about her English speaking abilities, even after undertaking extensive English classes at Oxford. Another reason behind Benani's withdrawal was due to regional pressure from the Arab League to have only one Arab candidate, thus improving the chances of a unified Arab front in support.

¶3. (C) Jirari told Poloff that she will share the U.S. concerns with her superiors and that Morocco will continue to solicit the input from other countries and partners before making its final decision which is usually one month prior to the final vote. Jirari expects many other candidates to come forward before that time and told Poloff that it is too early for Morocco to commit its support to any candidate. Jirari reminded Poloff that the final vote for UNESCO Director-General is conducted via secret ballot and that Morocco is not obligated to vote with the Arab League. She promised to contact the Embassy if Morocco has any suggestions for an alternative candidate.

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Riley